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## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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*The Economic Organization of England.* By WILLIAM J. ASHLEY.  
New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914. 8vo, pp. viii+213.  
\$0.90 net.

This volume consists of a series of eight lectures delivered in 1912 "as part of the general lecture system attached to the Colonial Institute of Hamburg." It is therefore necessarily brief and compact. Even so, it deserves very careful attention as the latest word of one of the most mature and one of the most distinguished of English economic historians.

Professor Ashley treats his subject historically and undertakes to discuss it in all its obvious phases, beginning roughly with the thirteenth century and devoting most of his time to the period before the Industrial Revolution. He properly lays the greatest stress upon agrarian questions, thereby bringing out the fact, too often obscured, that England, like all the rest of Europe, was until a hundred years ago in the main a farming country. He avoids the awkward question of the origin of the manor, starts with a description of the manor as it existed in the thirteenth century, and then proceeds to explain the changes which in the course of five hundred years gradually transformed it into the present system of English landholding. Like most writers who have before their eyes the contrast between English and Continental development in this regard, he is largely concerned with explaining the disappearance of the small landholder. In this connection it is refreshing to discover that he has wisely abandoned his earlier opinions about the tenure of copyholders and the persistence of the inclosure movement, which were pretty certainly unsound. Unfortunately he has apparently not availed himself of Professor Savine's recent contribution on the effect of the dissolution of the monasteries upon agrarian conditions. Had he done so he would probably have clung less closely to the traditional view as set forth by Abbot Gasquet. Yet, while he tends perhaps to overemphasize the economic importance of that change, he does well to call attention to the fact, not often observed, that the extensive transfers of land from Cavalier to Puritan proprietors a century later had an effect upon agrarian conditions which was far-reaching in its consequences and which pretty certainly hastened the decay of small holdings.

On the whole this discussion of rural economic organization is very satisfactory. So much good work has been done in recent years on that phase of English economic history by Gay, Tawney, Slater, Gonner, and others, that an able and judicious writer like Professor Ashley could hardly have failed to treat it well. With questions of urban economy he is not quite so successful. To be sure, he has not nearly as much first-rate secondary material to draw upon. At the outset he walks with rather firmer tread over the questions of gild origins than the uncertain nature of the ground will well support. German audiences particularly must have expected some allusion at least to the problematical relations of merchant gild and craft gild about which so much has been written by von Below and others in connection with the growth of town government in Germany. In describing the disintegration of the gilds Professor Ashley unravels a very tangled skein with unusual skill. It would perhaps be unfair to complain that the very simplicity and the clearness of his statement convey a somewhat false impression of the manifold difficulties involved. One must regret that in common with most writers on the development of the domestic system he has confined his attention almost exclusively to the woolen industry. He leaves the reader wondering to what extent and at what time the gild organization in other crafts succumbed before the expansion of the town market. On the last phase of urban industrial organization, the evolution of the factory system and the rise of capitalism in its various applications, he is necessarily extremely brief, but unusually stimulating and suggestive.

The chapters on trade are on the whole the least effective parts of the book. Professor Ashley has apparently ignored many important recent contributions to this subject, particularly those made by German and American scholars. In consequence, he has made more than one statement that is open to question. It is not at all certain, for example, that the Hansa merchants, so far as they traded in wool and other staple products, were exempt from the *Stapelzwang* which was imposed upon English traders, and it is certainly wrong to say that the Hansa "finally" lost their privileges in London in 1597. Again, it is hardly accurate to assert that the Venetians "had obstinately refused to let the English merchants enter the Levant to share their trade in Malmsey wine and currants." Yet these are, after all, relatively small points. Much more serious is Professor Ashley's failure to emphasize the enormous expansion of English trade under the Tudors, which stands out as perhaps the most significant fact in the history of English commerce during the early modern period.

Among the most interesting passages in the book are those which deal with the attitude of the government toward the economic problems of the times. Professor Ashley accepts Mr. Tawney's view of the service of the Tudor monarchy and of such instruments of Tudor despotism as the Court of Star Chamber in protecting the small landholder and the small artisan from the exploitation of the country squire and the city burgess. He agrees also that the victory of Parliament in the civil wars was on the whole disastrous to the economic welfare of the working classes both in town and in country. It is therefore rather surprising to discover that he inclines to commend the local administration of the justices of the peace, who were chiefly responsible for imposing upon England at large the economic policy of their particular class. With rather more emphasis than would seem to have been quite tactful before a German audience he presents the whole system of English local government under the old régime in favorable contrast to the bureaucratic system in operation at the same time in France and Prussia. Perhaps the country squire was more representative in character than the German bureaucrat, but it is not easy to discover that the Justice Shallows of the seventeenth century and the Squire Westerns of the eighteenth came any nearer to expressing the common interests of their localities than did the Prussian *Beamten*. Certainly their efficiency in office makes a sorry show when compared with that of many of the eighteenth-century French *intendants*.

It is curious to remark, in view of the careful attention which Professor Ashley pays to the policy of the state toward both rural and urban economy, that he has almost nothing to say about its policy toward foreign commerce. He never so much as mentions the Navigation acts and he bestows scarcely more than half a page to the Mercantile system in its relations both to trade and to colonial expansion. This is certainly a very serious omission and conveys the impression that conditions in England differed a good deal more in this respect from those on the Continent than in fact they did. Whether Colbertism was of the parliamentary or of the Prussian variety, it certainly was the dominating note in the economic policy, not only of the European states at large, but of England in particular during the century preceding the French Revolution.

The book as a whole is well worth the reading. The general soundness of its views as well as the admirable clearness and freshness of its style should commend it, not only to the professed economist, but also to everyone else who seeks to cultivate an intelligent interest in the

matters with which it deals. In connection with each chapter Professor Ashley furnishes a short bibliography of the most useful books in English for more extended reading. Though these lists of books do not pretend to be exhaustive, they are, with a few minor exceptions, singularly well chosen.

CONYERS READ

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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*English Taxation 1640-1799.* By WILLIAM KENNEDY. (Series of the London School of Economics and Political Science.) London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1913. 8vo, pp. ix+199. 7s. 6d.

In Kennedy's *English Taxation 1640-1799* we are supplied with an admirable interpretative study of English tax theories and methods in the light of the ruling political and social philosophy of the time. Mr. Kennedy describes his work as "An Essay on Policy and Opinion," and supports his belief in the necessity of such a study by maintaining that English writers on taxation have for the most part neglected questions of distribution, not even evincing a "consciousness of what constitutes the essential problems involved in the material with which they deal" in their attempt to give the chief facts of tax legislation and to accord due weight to constitutional and tariff questions. The writer's purpose is to "understand the way in which certain of the essential problems in taxation were dealt with and thought about in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England" (p. 3).

Finding a full understanding of nineteenth-century tax opinion impossible without such a "functional" study, and further concluding that by such survey the "social attitude or what may be called the practical political theories of that period" will be forced on the attention, he divides his treatment into a consideration of the purposes and distribution of taxation, and of the tax methods actually employed to attain them. On the distributive side the treatment is directed toward two questions: first, Should every member of the community be taxed? and second, What is the standard or criterion of distribution according to which the burden should be apportioned among those who are taxed? The answers to these questions are sought in theories of incidence, in the feelings of compassion or disgust for the poor, in political theory, and in the fluctuating conditions of the English exchequer.

The table of contents includes: "The Inheritance of the Long Parliament"; "Customs and Taxes and Excises for the Period 1640-1713";